

THE NEW
EXCITEMENT;

OR A

BOOK TO INDUCE YOUNG PEOPLE
TO READ.

FOR M.D.CCCXLI.

CONTAINING

REMARKABLE APPEARANCES IN NATURE,
SIGNAL PRESERVATIONS,
AND SUCH INCIDENTS AS ARE PARTICULARLY
FITTED TO ARREST THE YOUTHFUL MIND.

BY THE EDITOR OF "THE NEW EXCITEMENT" FOR
1838 AND 1839, AND OF "THE EXCITEMENT"
FOR THE PRECEDING YEARS.

"In every work regard the writer's end."

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she got, shook herself and raised and crooked her tail over her haunches, in token of complete satisfaction, went off prancing, kicking, and curvetting with every appearance of health and gaiety, and, taking the place in the van, was from that moment as well as ever.

A RHINOCEROS HUNT.

Le Vaillant's narrative of a rhinoceros in South Africa, "an immense menagerie," as he appropriately terms the country, may interest such of our readers as are actuated by the spirit of Nimrod, and long for mightier game to follow than hares or foxes.

In the midst of this immense menagerie, the variety of which kept me in a continual state of enchantment, I was surprised not to find that prodigious number of rhinoceroses which had been mentioned to me by the people of Haripa's horde.

One day, however, Klaas, who was always concerned in every matter of importance, and the first to communicate agreeable intelligence, came in great haste to my tent to inform me, that he had observed at some distance from my camp two of these animals standing quietly close to each other in the middle of the plain, and that I had it in my power to enjoy the pleasure of the finest hunt I had ever yet experienced.

The hunt indeed promised to be amusing, but, independently of danger, I foresaw that it was likely to be attended with difficulties. To attack two such formidable enemies it was necessary to use great precaution, and that we should approach them in such a manner as that they might neither see nor smell us, which is always very difficult. I at first proposed to form a ring which should surround them on all sides, and to advance upon them, gradually contracting the circle, so as to unite the moment we were about to commence our attack ; but the savages assured me that with these animals this plan was impracticable. I gave myself up therefore entirely to their direction, and we set out armed alike with a good fusee and with the necessary courage. All my hunters wished to be of the party, and each proposed to display the greatest prowess. I caused two of my strongest dogs to be led in a leash, in order that they might be let loose on the rhinoceroses in case it should be found necessary. We were obliged to make a long circuit to gain the lea-side of them, lest they should smell us ; and we reached the river, the course of which we followed under cover of the large trees that grew on its banks, when Klaas soon made us observe the two animals at about the distance of a quarter of a league in the plain. As one of them was much larger than the other, I supposed them to

be a male and female. Motionless by the side of each other, they were still in the same posture in which Klaas had first seen them, but they stood with their noses to the wind, and consequently presented to us their rumps.

It is the custom of these animals when thus at rest to place themselves in the direction of the wind, in order that they may discover by their smell what enemies they have to dread. From time to time, however, they move their heads round to take a look behind them, and to be assured that they are safe on all sides ; but it is only a look, and they soon return to their former position.

We were already deliberating on the dispositions to be made for commencing the attack, and I was giving some orders to my company, when Jonker, one of my Hottentots, requested that I would permit him to attack the two animals alone as a *vekruyper*.

My readers will here recollect that, when I foolishly attempted to cross the Elephant's river, near its mouth, on the trunk of a tree, Jonker was one of the swimmers who saved my life, and that in return, at the desire of his companions, I raised him to the rank of hunter. At that time he was entirely a novice in this exercise, but I have already remarked that he afterwards became a most excellent shot, and surpassed all the rest

of my hunters, particularly in the art of creeping. I have before observed that hunting in Africa has no resemblance to that in Europe ; that to get within the reach of certain wild animals we must approach them without being perceived ; and that it is impossible to get near them but by creeping on the belly. Those who have acquired this art are called vekruypers, and it was in this quality that Jonker asked leave to attack alone the two rhinoceroses, assuring me that he would acquit himself to my satisfaction.

As his design would not prevent the execution of our plan, and as, in case his particular attack should not succeed, it would not impede our general one, I granted his request. He then stripped himself naked, and, taking his fusee, proceeded towards the animals, creeping on his belly like a serpent.

In the meantime, I pointed out to my hunters the different posts they were to occupy. They repaired to them by circuitous ways, each accompanied by two men. As for me, I remained on the spot where I was with two Hottentots, one of whom held my horse, and the other my dogs ; but, to avoid being seen, we posted ourselves behind a bush.

In my hand I held a glass, which had often enabled me to see the operation of stage machinery, and the effect of our theatrical deco-

rations. How changed the scene ! at this moment it brought before me two hideous monsters, which at times turned towards me their frightful heads. Their movements, which indicated fear and observation, soon became more frequent, and I was apprehensive they had heard the agitation of my dogs, who, having discovered them, made efforts to escape from the keeper, and rush upon them. Jonker still kept slowly advancing, but with his eyes fixed on the two animals. If he saw them turn their heads, he stopped, and remained motionless ; one would have taken him for a large stone, and indeed, in this respect, I myself was deceived. He continued creeping with various interruptions for more than an hour. At length I saw him proceed towards a large bush of *euphorbia*, which was only 200 paces from the animals. Being certain when he reached it that he could conceal himself there without being seen, he rose up, and, casting his eyes everywhere around, to see whether his comrades had arrived at their posts, he made preparations for firing. During the time he was creeping along I had followed him with my eye, and, in proportion as he advanced, I felt my heart beat with involuntary palpitation.

This palpitation, however, increased when I saw him so near the animals, and just upon the point of firing at one of them : what would I not

have given at that moment to have been in the place of Jonker, or at least by his side, that I might have brought down also one of these savage monsters? I waited with the utmost impatience for the report of the gun, and I could not conceive what prevented him from firing, but the Hottentot who stood near me, and who was able by the bare sight to distinguish him as perfectly as I could with my glass, informed me of his design. He told me that Jonker did not fire because he was waiting till one of the rhinoceroses should turn round, that he might if possible take aim at his head, and that on the first motion they made I should hear the report.

Presently, the largest of the two having looked behind, was immediately fired at; being wounded, he sent forth a horrid cry, and, followed by the female, ran furiously towards the place where the noise had proceeded. I found my heart now agitated by the most violent emotion, and my fear was carried to its utmost extent. A cold sweat diffused itself over my whole body, and my heart beat with such force as to prevent me from breathing. I expected to see the two monsters tear up the bush, tread the unfortunate Jonker under their feet, and tear him to pieces; but he had thrown himself down with his belly on the ground, and this stratagem succeeded. They passed close by his side without perceiving

him, and came straight towards me. My fear now gave place to joy, and I prepared to receive them ; but my dogs, animated by the report they had heard, became so restless on their approach, that, being unable to check them, I ordered them to be let loose, and encouraged them to the attack. When the animals saw this, they instantly turned aside, and proceeded towards another of the hunter's placed in ambush, from whom they received a second fire, and then to another, from whom they received a third ; my dogs, on the other hand, harassed them prodigiously, which still increased their rage ; they kicked at them in the most terrible manner, ploughed up the plain with their horns, and digging furrows in it seven or eight inches in depth, threw around them a shower of pebbles and stones.

During this time we all kept approaching, in order to surround them more closely, and to unite against them our forces. The multitude of enemies by which they found themselves enclosed rendered them completely furious. The male, however, suddenly stopped, and, turning round to attack the dogs, endeavoured to rip up their bellies with his horn, and while he was engaged in pursuing them the female quitted him and made her escape. I was highly pleased at her flight, which I consider as a fortunate circumstance ; for it is certain, notwithstanding our

numbers and our arms, we should have been much embarrassed by two so formidable adversaries. I must even confess that without the assistance of my dogs we should not have been able to combat, but with great hazard and danger, the one that remained. The bloody traces which he left wherever he went announced that he had received more than one wound ; but, reduced to despair, he only defended himself with the greater obstinacy.

After a fruitless attack, which lasted for some time, he began to retreat, and seemed as if desirous of gaining some bushes, apparently with a view of finding shelter, and to prevent his being harassed but in front. I guessed this stratagem, and, in order to disappoint him, I rushed towards the bushes, and made a sign to the two hunters who were nearest to me to advance there also. He was only thirty paces from us when we took possession of the post ; accordingly, we all at the same time presented our pieces, and, discharging our three shots, he instantly fell, and was never after able to rise. I beheld his fall with the utmost satisfaction : as a hunter and a naturalist it afforded me a double triumph.

Though mortally wounded, the animal still continued to defend himself when lying on the ground as he had done when on his legs ; with his feet he threw around him heaps of stones,

and neither we nor our dogs durst venture to approach him.

I wished to put an end to his torment by firing one more ball, and was making preparations for the purpose, when my people entreated me to desist. As I could not ascribe their request to pity, I was at a loss to conceive what could be their motive. I have already said that all the savage tribes, and even the people at the Cape, and in the colonies, set a high value on the dried blood of the rhinoceros, to which they ascribe great virtues. The animal had lost a great deal by his wounds. It was with much regret that they saw the earth moistened with it around him, and they were apprehensive that a new wound would increase that loss.

Scarcely had the animal breathed his last, when both old and new Hottentots all approached with eagerness in order to collect the blood. With that view they cut open its belly, and took out the bladder, which they emptied. One of them applied the mouth of it to one of the wounds, while the rest shook a leg of the animal to make the blood flow more readily. In a little time to their great joy the bladder was filled, and I am persuaded that with what was lost they might have filled twenty.

I had approached the body also, but with a different design ; for my intention was only to measure and examine it.

The savages of the horde, accustomed to see such animals very often, assured me that it was one of the largest of its species.

I however did not believe them, and what induced me to doubt their information was, that its principal horn was only (in French measure) nineteen inches three lines in length, and I had seen horns much longer in the possession of some of the Dutch planters. The height of the animal was seven feet, five inches ; and its length, from the snout to the root of the tail, eleven feet, six inches.

MODE OF KILLING THE HIPPOPOTAMUS.

We have translated the following account of the mode of killing the hippopotamus in Dongola, from the travels of Dr. Edward Kuppell, a careful observer, and a trustworthy writer. Dongola is a narrow slip of country lying on both sides of the Nile, and extending southward from 19° 43' of north latitude for about 170 miles, measured along the coast of the stream.

The harpoon, with which the natives attack the hippopotamus, terminates in a flat oval-shaped piece of iron, three-fourths of the outer rim of which are sharpened to a very fine edge. To the upper part of this iron, one end of a long stout cord is fastened, and the other is tied to a thick piece of